



# South-Central Dispatch

Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana  
Spring 2003

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## AstroWorld Hits A Homerun With Spring Con

Texans have always been known for their hospitality which was in abundance this past April as AstroWorld hosted the annual ACE Spring Conference. Celebrating their 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season this year, AstroWorld welcomed ACE into their park by showing they can throw one seriously fun party.

As the event began on Friday evening, people started arriving at the employee lot around 6:30 p.m. The park provided this additional privilege by closing to the public on Friday. AstroWorld posted numerous signs along the way to the registration table at the Showcase Theater making it very easy to locate, even someone who had never been to the park before easily located the table. Registration began promptly at 7 p.m. with the help of several volunteers from the region. Here members had time to mingle with other arriving attendees, sign up for "The Weakest Link", check out the cool South Central Region t-shirts being offered for sale, or meet the relatively new South Central Regional Rep team. As registration ended, attendees started making their way over to the Alpine Pavilion to enjoy some delicious Tex-Mex food from Pappasito's.

Opening night's ERT started on the world's first coaster built as tribute to the Coney Island *Cyclone*, our very own Bill Cobb designed *Texas Cyclone*. With the removal of the dreaded "coffin car" headrests only two seasons back, many attendees were taking their first rides on *Texas Cyclone* since the modification. With airtime and laterals in abundance, many ACEers were elated at how wonderful, after 27 years, the *Texas Cyclone* was still running ... and once more with a great view!

As AstroWorld always wants step up and add something extra to an event, Public Relations Manager, Ms. Daryl Freedman, and Director of Entertainment, Mr. Terry Overstreet, came up with one ghoulish idea. They treated ACE members to the Phantom Funhouse of Fright, a 3D haunted house filled with terrifying insane clowns! Wearing their special 3D glasses provided by the park, those ACE members brave enough to enter narrowly escaped the maddening grip of insanity found inside!

As attendees gathered inside the Showcase Theatre for the evening's presentations, AstroWorld summoned the Loony Toons characters for a special meet and greet and they danced around the theatre with the ACE members. Gary Baker, ACE's Events Director, kicked off the evening's presentations, and then capitulated the microphone over to President Carole Sanderson.

Much to the delight of those in attendance, AstroWorld opened up a special Q & A session with their Maintenance Director, Kent Maulsby, and Operations Manager, George Schilling.



Registration at the Showcase Theater



Volunteers waiting for registration to begin



ACE President Carole Sanderson and Information Services Director Brian Peters mingle with the crowd  
All photos by Jason Knutson



Spring Con knocks out Regional Rep.

## The Curly Seat

This is becoming my modus operandi. After selecting a topic for the view from the Regional Rep's seat, and within a week from when I am to put fingers to keyboard, something strikes me from out of the blue and I end up writing about something unexpected at the last minute. While this drives my Assistant Regional Reps (and me) just a little crazy, as it usually delays the actual construction of the quarterly newsletter by a day or two, it makes for a better piece and newsletter.

Originally I was going to write about how amazingly active our region is, as we are in the middle of participating in no less than TEN HAPPENINGS -- two park media days, a national Conference, a park Grand Opening, two park events, two park filming days, a park theater premiere, and a commercial shoot for a restaurant chain -- all within TWO MONTHS! Needless to say, I was on the verge of complete burnout by the time I left for the five-hour drive to AstroWorld for ACE's Spring Con. Despite not feeling well and having a last minute work assignment that required me to be in the office the morning I was to be off for my departure for Houston, seeing over 200 ACE members, the park, and the AstroWorld staff did perk me up. Still not feeling 100% on Saturday, I went back to my hotel room for a rest late in the afternoon.

While I was sharing a hotel with two friends, this was the first time I had been alone during the event. It was a bit odd, but restful. Feeling a little better, I started back to the park.

As I was walking across AstroWorld's bridge over Interstate 610 to re-enter the park that evening, I was deep in thought about all the details that had to work for the night's events to be a success. Then a sight slapped me out of my deep thoughts. I saw three five-year olds buzzing around a tired mom like hummingbirds juiced-up on Jolt Cola. While the mom clearly looked beat, she had a smile as she kept an eye on the little ones heading out to their vehicle. Then a young teen couple holding hands and snuggled up close to each other took my attention. Next, my focus went wide angle and I saw hundreds and hundreds of happy faces on kids, teens, and adults all heading out to their cars. (Not a one sad or angry face in the bunch! Believe me, I started looking for at least one unhappy camper ... I could not!) Then it all hit home when I saw a father holding his daughter as he walked peacefully to their car. The little girl was no older than four, and was out like a light -- but hugging her daddy. Besides feeling good for the first time in four days, these sights struck me on two levels.

First, despite that unique combination of Houston heat and humidity, and a rather heavy crowd at the park that Saturday, AstroWorld delivered a great day to thousands. Second, what I saw Saturday evening IS what it's really all about ... not ride counts, inversions, steel vs. wood, etc. We go to parks to spend time and share experiences with friends, family, and the loves of our lives. A good park will deliver the opportunity for people to share those experiences in a positive way. During Spring Con weekend AstroWorld was an excellent park - not just for ACE, but for just about everyone. And that my friends, is my view from The Curly Seat.

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## Thank You!

**Your David, Scott and Jason Regional Rep team would like to thank the following people:** Chuck Hendrix, Daryl Freedman, Sherry Burr, Kent Maulsby, Lynda Baldwin, George Schilling and everyone else at AstroWorld who helped make Spring Con a huge success. Spring Con volunteers Jason McMillan, Roxanne West, John Pavlick, Tim Baldwin, Jeff Seifert, Gus Bilderback, Dan McPartland and John O'Steen. Gary Slade, Joe Heflin, S. Madonna Horcher and Steven Castaneda for their services/assistance during Spring Con. Patty Burrus and Fran Stephenson of Sea World San Antonio for inviting a regional rep to preview the new 4-D attraction. Ann Wills and Terry Prather of Six Flags New Orleans for inviting regional ACE reps to opening day. Sandra Daniels, Melissa Pinkerton and Steve Calloway of Six Flags Over Texas and Daryl Freedman and Chuck Hendrix of AstroWorld for inviting ACE to attend their media days. Neighboring regional reps, Scott and Carol Holmes, Barry Maness, Jeff Mast and Robert Ulrich. General Thanks to Paul (P.D.) Borchardt of Wonderland Park, Sherrie Brammell of Schlitterbahn and Duane Brown of Fiesta Texas. And finally, for newsletter assistance: Tim Baldwin, Steven Castaneda, S. Madonna Horcher, Daniel Kraig, Jason McMillan, Jeff Seifert, Mark Small, Xander Lee, Melanie Pigg, Paul McKinney and Christopher Daniello.



## Commentary

By the time you read this, most parks will have begun daily operation for the season. I've already managed several park visits thus far since opening weekend in March, and have been to three of our major parks in two states. I will have been to a fourth one (Fiesta Texas) by the time you read this. But I am focusing instead on the visits I've already made this year.

All three of the parks I've been to have been very hospitable, and I've noticed employees seem to be much friendlier this season. Rides have been sufficiently staffed for the most part, and most of the new (and relocated) rides in our region seem to be big hits, both with enthusiasts and with the public at large.

When the parks open in the morning, they are nice and clean, and usually manage to stay that way for a couple of hours. It seems though, that as the day progresses, the trash seems to start piling up, and particularly in one specific area. The queue line. On my most recent park visit, late on Saturday afternoon, I spent about 25 minutes waiting in line with a handful of fellow enthusiasts to board a 'transport' ride. Drink cups, food boats, candy wrappers, and of course gum ... everywhere! I looked for a trash can, but only recall seeing one in the entire line.

Please put more trash cans in the lines, and make sure they are the 'open' style (not having flaps to push open). And PLEASE make sure they get checked periodically! Sure would help to sweep the line as well. One person could sweep four queue lines, hitting each one every 15 minutes. A clean park is a happy park!

Angus said it best... "Smile, and pick up those butts!"



Photo Courtesy of AstroWorld

### AstroWorld Debuts SWAT and Diablo Falls

The day began with rainy skies, and even hail in some parts of town, but that wouldn't keep me from riding the two newest additions to AstroWorld's lineup of thrill rides, SWAT and Diablo Falls. The event was to begin at 11 a.m., and I arrived in the parking lot at about 11:30, as I had been delayed by the rain. By this time the rain had nearly stopped and the skies were beginning to clear. I checked in and headed for the Mexicana section of the park where the two new rides are located. As I got closer to the area I spotted Scott Connor, assistant regional rep, whom I would end up riding both rides with the remainder of the day. One of the first things I noticed was the newly completed station for Diablo Falls. I had been in the park the weekend before and was amazed at the difference just a few days had made.

This event was more of an informal media preview day, so we got to enjoy plenty of rides on both SWAT and Diablo Falls. First, we would ride SWAT. What a way to get the blood pumping. This ride is like nothing anywhere else in the world. After being seated and the restraints locked, we slowly started the rise up to the top of the towers. Then the spinning begins. Up and over we went. Then back an under we went for a total of three rotations in each direction. The spinning stops and we're gently lowered back to earth. WOW! What a rush. Let's do it all over again from the other side.

After a few spins on SWAT it was time to experience Diablo Falls. I have to be honest and say from looking at this ride it really didn't look all that exciting, but that opinion was soon to change. We loaded into the raft and began the climb up the lift hill. As we dropped off of the lift and into the flume, the spinning started. This ride is cool.

After spinning uncontrollably we made it to the bottom of the flume, and under the jet sprays. We slowly drifted back to the station, but we couldn't stop with just one ride. We kept going...and going...and going. I lost count of how many times we rode. The more people in the raft the more fun it is, because the raft spins more. I think we counted 10 complete spins on one of our trips. What a surprising ride.

Well, that's about it. What a great day we had enjoying these two great new rides. Thanks to Daryl Freedman and the park staff for allowing us to be a part of it.

—Mark Small



Photo by Melanie Pigg

### Six Flags Over Texas Debuts Superman Tower of Power

It's a bird! It's a plane! No, it's Superman: Tower of Power, the newest thrill ride at Six Flags Over Texas. 48 regional ACEers arrived well before the crack of dawn on March 26<sup>th</sup> to experience the worlds tallest S & S combo tower, topping out (with flagpole) at 325 feet, just enough to eclipse the landmark Oil Derrick as the tallest fixture in the park.

ACEers were treated to ERT from 5 am to 5 pm, and riding before daybreak provided the opportunity to ride in the dark, while enjoying the magnificent light show. ACE members were given exclusive use of the yellow tower during the early session, and many rides were enjoyed before daybreak during windy & quite cool conditions. Shortly after dawn broke, the park graciously provided breakfast items for all in attendance.

Our enthusiastic group made their way back to the Super towers for even more rides before the break for the official opening ceremony. PR cutie Sandra Daniels got the ball rolling by introducing the emcee for the festivities, Nikki McKibbin from the television series American Idol. The honorable Elzie Odom, mayor of Arlington, spoke about the importance of the tourism industry in Arlington and the role Six Flags Over Texas plays in that. Tom Vandergriff, the mayor at the time Six Flags opened, reminisced about the 'early days' of the park. The theme of the day was 'heroes', and Bob Smith, a young man who rescued two girls from a vicious dog attack while sustaining injuries himself, was hailed as a true hero. He spoke about the importance of heroes in life, and pointed out various groups of heroes we encounter in everyday life, such as police, firefighters, and members of the military. These groups were ushered to the front of the line for the ceremonial first ride.

Lunch followed, and wow, what a spread of food we were treated to. Smoked brisket and turkey and all the trimmings were the order of the day, and if anyone left the table hungry, it was their own fault! Tummies full, enthusiastic ACEers headed back over to the towers for even more exhilarating rides, but now in the bright Texas sun. In fact, we were able to ride all the way until 5 pm. ACE was the only group invited to stay for the entire day, and for that a Texas-sized thank you goes out to Sandra, Melissa Pinkerton, Katie Burgess, Steve Calloway and the entire Six Flags Over Texas for a media event of SUPER proportions! Congratulations on your awesome new thrill ride.

—Scott Connor



Photo by Paul McKinney

### South Central Region Members Take Part in Commercial Shoot at Six Flags Over Texas

And The Award Goes To...

First, I'd like to thank the Academy. I never would have imagined that I would win Best Actor in a Television Commercial. OK, that's not really likely to happen, but I can pretend. On April 9th, seven ACE members had an opportunity to experience a little bit of Hollywood at Six Flags Over Texas during a commercial shoot for a restaurant chain. We were joined by about two-dozen actors to ride the *Wildfire*, a renamed and redecorated *Shock Wave* to fit with the theme of the restaurant's new menu. The production team explained that the food is as exciting as a roller coaster, but I doubt that any restaurant can live up to the excitement of riding the *Shock Wave* all day long.

The first phase was wardrobe, where they picked out what colors we would wear. Although most of us were in solid red, yellow, or orange, David Lipnicky wins the Outstanding Costume award for his tie-dye shirt. After two rides, one amateur was getting sick and bailed out, but most held out the entire day. Of course it was not continuous riding, as they had to stop to adjust cameras, let us eat lunch, go to the restroom, etc. Still, it was probably a bit of a struggle for the actors to hang in there, but I feel our enthusiasm helped push them through the day.

We made a few friends and met some potential future ACE members. By the end of the twelve-hour workday, some had 42 rides under their belt (I only had 38), but the entire train of riders was still excited with their hands in the air throughout the ride. No one had to act as if they were having a great time.

While it would not be fair to count *Wildfire* in my coaster counts, this was my first experience being paid to ride a coaster, so I will add "Professional Roller Coaster Rider" to my resumé.

—Daniel Kraig



Photo by Tim Baldwin

## Spring Con 2003 (continued from page 1)

Fielding questions from the audience, the gentlemen touched on such bittersweet subjects as *Texas Tornado* to reminiscing over the opening year of everyone's favorite shuttle loop, *Greezed Lightnin'*. Then we learned ACE Volunteer Coordinator Mike Robinson's true age, as George Schilling recalled fond memories of working with Mike on the much beloved Arrow mine train *Excalibur* (removed from the park after the 1998 season). Once the welcome session ended, everyone retired for the evening knowing a second full day of festivities was just around the corner. But as a final surprise to the evening, everyone in attendance was given a free 35th anniversary t-shirt!

Bright and early on Saturday morning, ACE members came back for some of the most anticipated ERT. Looming 60 feet in the air in all her glory, SWAT beckoned ACE members to take a spin. Other rides also open for ERT included *Dungeon Drop* and *The Viper*, but it was the one-of-a-kind SWAT that generated the most interest. SWAT looks very intimidating, so those that decided not to ride grabbed some of the provided breakfast pastries and a beverage and sat to watch those brave enough to ride this new contraption from S&S Power. Even our own Regional Rep required coaxing to ride. Rising up 60 feet above the ground, riders endured 3 forward flips and 3 backward flips before gently lowering back to the ground creating sensations that no other ride duplicates.

As the morning's festivities ended and the park opened to the public, ACEers ecstatically were among the first patrons aboard the newest Whitewater West waterslide, *Diablo Falls*. This amazing water raft ride proved a smash hit, featuring Virginia Reel type spinning and strategically placed geysers along the course. The surprise triple dip ending actually gives this waterslide airtime. Those that didn't take part in one of the first rides on this new attraction took the time to check out AstroWorld's other attractions in the hour before it was time to enter WaterWorld for lunch.

Always the gracious host, AstroWorld catered in for lunch some of the finest Texas cuisine around from Pappa's Bar-B-Q. Everyone in attendance agreed that it was indeed a visually entertaining and delightfully different treat to have our luncheon held inside WaterWorld on the shores of the Hurricane Bay wave pool. After lunch everyone had plenty of time to go out and enjoy AstroWorld on his or her own or spend the afternoon relaxing in a complimentary inner tube at WaterWorld before the festivities resumed in the Showcase Theater at 9 p.m.

As everyone gathered again at the Showcase Theater, the evening's events started with an encore presentation of a video showcasing the south central region's members, parks and coasters originally created for Winterfest by Jason Knutson based on a suggestion by David Lipnicky. Next came the plaque presentation to AstroWorld for hosting Spring Conference. AstroWorld's Vice-President and General Manager Chuck Hendrix made a quick speech in which he expressed enthusiasm that our organization decided upon holding our event in his park. During his speech, knowing some of the opinions expressed in the past over this great underdog amusement park, Mr. Hendrix uttered the now famous quote, "We know what we are, and we know what we aren't, and just like the Army, we're going to be all that we can be." Next on the evening's agenda: the always-popular "Weakest Link" coaster game show, hosted by Tim Baldwin. One by one, 5 of the 6 contestants got voted off for missing easy to hard coaster related questions. South Central Region's own Jimmy Johnson luckily and skillfully made it all the way to the end and won the prize.

Always the professional, Gary Slade took the stage and revisited his article from the most recent ACE News speaking of his "Buck a Ride" program. Gary kick-started the donations by donating the first \$2.00 towards the ACE Roller Coaster Museum fund for his two rides that evening on *Texas Cyclone*. As a special surprise treat, Gary Slade then introduced Joe Heflin, Sales Manager for WhiteWater West. Joe entertained the crowd talking about his decades long career working with many well-known names in the industry, including Intamin of Switzerland.



Night ERT on Texas Cyclone

Photo: Jason Knutson



Diablo Falls Opening Day

Photo: Steven Castaneda



ERT on SWAT

Photo: Jason Knutson



Scott Connor rakes in some extra cash by charging for rides on *The Texas Cyclone*.

Photo: S. Madonna Horcher

We all sat and enjoyed the long trip down memory lane as Mr. Heflin spoke of the fantastic creations he had helped sell to the amusement industry.

Next came the auction benefiting the ACE museum fund. The Items auctioned off, all graciously donated by AstroWorld, included some of the registration signs created by the park for the event and a very nice *Texas Cyclone* poster featuring the original 4-bench PTC trains.

The final item on Saturday evening's agenda inside the Showcase Theater was door prizes. Embarrassingly we discovered that the regional rep team forgot the raffle tickets back in their hotel room! ACE Information Services Director, Brian Peters, suggested collecting everyone's name badges in order to draw for door prizes (we later found out that he wasn't really serious about doing that, but it turned out to be a good solution). After a quick collection of nametags the drawings began with the help of a couple of ACE's younger members drawing the names and handing them over to Events Director Gary Baker and AstroWorld's Daryl Freedman and PR Coordinator Sherry Burr handing out the door prizes.

Picking up nametags on the way out of the theater, we headed out for more ERT. As the evening's riding began, AstroWorld treated attendees to more fabulous *Texas Cyclone* time as well as rides on *Ultra Twister* and even the Thunder Road Raceway Go-Karts! Around midnight, it was time to call it a night and return home or to a hotel to get some shut-eye before the final Sunday morning ERT session.

8 a.m. seemed to come way too early Sunday morning. With all the activities and the great ERT sessions AstroWorld had provided, 6 hours of sleep just didn't seem to cut it for most folk. Some attendees tried to catch a little extra rest between cycles on the morning's featured rides. Some lay on benches while others rested in La Cantina after enjoying some of the morning snacks and drinks AstroWorld had provided. Sunday morning's agenda included *Batman The Escape*, *Diablo Falls*, *Greezed Lightnin'* and *XLR-8*. Those that hadn't ridden it already on Saturday got to experience the only Arrow Suspended that you can ride backwards. AstroWorld's creative maintenance department came up with this idea for 2002's Fright Fest, but it proved so popular it was held over for the following year.

10 a.m came quickly and the park opened to the public. Spring Con 2003 officially ended, however for those that were at the last ERT session on *Greezed Lightnin'*, ERT wasn't really over. Standing and sitting in the area in front of *Greezed Lightnin'*'s station were about 12 ACE members enjoying a leisurely chat. We soon realized that *Greezed Lightnin'* hadn't launched since ERT had ended and there were no other people in that area of the park. Heading up into the station, this group was treated to a bonus 20 minutes of *Greezed Lightnin'* ERT! No one left the train during those 20 minutes and in fact, the ride ops didn't even release the lap bars between cycles. The time finally came when other park guests made it back to the ride and our bonus ride session came to an end. We gave the ride crew a big "Thank You" for the extra ERT and now it was time to catch a few other rides in the park, head home, or go out to some of the other wonderful attractions in the Houston area.

With all the fantastic ERT, surprises, food, and entertainment, Spring Con 2003 was truly a great event! AstroWorld treated us wonderfully, proving their dedication to their relationship with ACE. It's with great appreciation that ACE says "Thank you!" to AstroWorld for all the little extras given to us.

— Jason Knutson and Jason McMillan



Back Row: Jason Knutson, Scott Connor, David Lipnicky  
Front Row: George Schilling, Daryl Freedman, Kent Maulsby  
Photo: S. Madonna Horcher



Viper ERT Photo: Jason Knutson



Time for ERT after the group photo. Photo: Jason Knutson



Greezed Lightnin' ERT Photo: Jason Knutson



## Sea World San Antonio Premieres R.L. Stine's Haunted Lighthouse 4-D

On Wednesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, Sea World San Antonio held a party for the premier of their newest attraction, R.L. Stine's Haunted Lighthouse 4-D.

A story and movie written for the Busch Gardens parks by the creator of the extremely popular "Goosebumps" series, Haunted Lighthouse is a movie that the entire family can enjoy. R.L. Stine was present for the premier and talked a bit about how he came up with the idea for the movie before it was shown to those in attendance. With a seating capacity of approximately 750, the movie is showcased in Sea Worlds brand new air conditioned Sea Star Theater. While these types of "4-D" theaters are common on the East and West coast, Sea World San Antonio's is possibly the only one that exists outside of those areas and certainly the only one in the South. The 4<sup>th</sup> "D" in 4-D comes from the sensory experience involved. If you've never seen a 4-D movie before, you will be in for a treat. If you've seen a 4-D movie at one of the other parks that have these types of theaters, then you already know what to expect. This movie is different from others in that it features live action instead of animation. The movie stars Christopher Lloyd, Michael McKean and Lea Thompson with a cameo by "Weird Al" Yankovic. At approximately 20 minutes in length, this attraction will be a great place to cool off and see a movie during the hot Texas summers. Also be sure to check out the former Pirate's Cove gift shop which has been remodeled and turned in to Sea Star Market featuring some very unique gift items and a sandwich and pastry shop. R.L. Stine's Haunted Lighthouse 4-D opened to the public on Saturday, May 16<sup>th</sup>.

— Article and photos by Jason Knutson



## Louisiana Theme Park is Reborn as Six Flags New Orleans Springs to Life

The spirit of the former Jazzland amusement park was brought back to life with \$20+ million worth of adrenalin as the new Six Flags New Orleans theme park had a successful Grand Opening on Saturday, April 12. This rebirth included new trees, new shading, a new section (DC Comics), and new rides!

ACE and the city of New Orleans had to wait a week longer than expected to actually experience the well promoted changes Six Flags planned to bring to the 3-year-old Jazzland. Unfortunately, the park experienced construction and shipping delays, and as the scheduled opening day of April 5 approached, Six Flags president and Chief Operating Officer Gary Story decided to delay the opening a week to give the City of New Orleans the full Six Flags experience rather than open unfinished. An extremely wise decision, since heavy rains came down on April 5, but the weather more than cooperated for the rescheduled Grand Opening celebration as patrons experienced gorgeous blue skies and temperatures that were quite mild for New Orleans.

Before the opening ceremony, one could tell the City was extremely proud and grateful to Six Flags for saving their park as newscasters, the press, the public, and local coaster enthusiasts praised Six Flags and their management team long before the park even opened its gates. After the opening ceremony in the new DC Comics section at the site of the new "Batman Thrill Spectacular" -- which was fully attended by media, the public, park General Manager Terry Prather, the Mayor of New Orleans, and Batman himself -- most sprinted to *Batman: The Ride*.

Regional Rep Team members Scott and David, who have been riding this type of B&M layout for almost decade, expected just another typically solid ride experience. Maybe it was the Grand Opening excitement, the cooler than normal temperatures, the relocation from Japan, the great refurbishment job done by SFNO maintenance team, or the ride's location looking over the lake, but both were happily surprised at how fast this incarnation was as it immediately became both member's favorite BTR in the Six Flags chain. (Sorry Six Flags Over Texas.) Whether you love BTRs or are rather jaded by them, this ride is not just perfect for this park, it is perfectly presented ... it just rocks! However, the daytime ride is nothing compared to the night flight! A night-climb up the chain-lift is life experience in itself. As the foot-dangling train ascends the lift, riders are treated to a virtual cornucopia of panoramic sights.

Straight ahead is the lake and its awe-inspiring reflections, to the left are the lively lights of downtown New Orleans, and to the right are the neon sights and sounds of a beautiful park partying down! Sunset rides, with the sun's rays ripping across the lake, are an absolute life-affirming experience this Regional Rep will never forget! Terry Prather deserves a Nobel Prize for the location and positioning of this magnificent machine!

As for the rest of the park, the Six Flags treatment works very well. This infusion includes a total of 14 new rides and attractions, an enlargement of the park grounds by 16 acres, and \$1 million on landscaping alone. The landscaping includes more shade from 50 newly planted mature oak and magnolia trees through the park, plus additional shade structures along the midways. Other additions include:

**The Jester** – a three-inversion backwards-running steel coaster (the *Jokers Revenge* relocated from Fiesta Texas) ... and yes, it still runs backwards. Three new flat rides (in the new DC Comics section which work nicely in this park) which are **Lex Luthor's Invertatron**, **Catwoman's Whip** (complete with a provocative Catwoman centerpiece) and **Joker's Jukebox**. A kiddie area re-themed as Looney Tunes Adventures with a new kiddie ride named **Technicolor Tweety Balloons**. A "Pop Jet" water fountain and finally, ten new shows!

*MegaZeph* showed no sign of letting up as it delivered the same type of wild-woodie rides as exhibited last year at ACE's Spring Conference. While *The Jester* maintenance crew worked all day to get the ride open, minor testing delays beyond the control of the park prevented the coaster's debut that Saturday. While coaster fans were disappointed, it did not have a significant impact on the public's jovial mood. (*The Jester* is now thrilling local park patrons and should start two-train operation around the time the park starts its daily operations on May 24.)

Despite the minor glitches that pop up here and there during any first day of the operating season, Six Flags Grand Opening was an outstanding success. The public supported the park by delivering great attendance numbers, and the park supported the public by delivering a big-time Thrill Park experience. The infusion from Six Flags may be just what this promising park needs.

-- David S. Lipnicky

NOTE: The South Central Region would like to thank Six Flags New Orleans' Public Relations Manager, the amazing Ann Wills, for asking the Regional Rep Team to be a part of this neat New Orleans celebration. (The drive was well worth it!) We hope to work with Ann very soon!

Photo courtesy of Six Flags New Orleans / Amusement Today



## Nuts & Bolts (Items in Brief)

**Mr. Freeze Now Open** at Six Flags Over Texas. After going through some extended maintenance, *Mr. Freeze* at Six Flags Over Texas opened with two train operation on May 17th. Welcome back *Mr. Freeze*! Batman has been lonely!

**Armadillo Beach Opens:** Just in time for the Texas heat, Fiesta Texas' Armadillo Beach (waterpark) is now open.

**Lone Star Coasterthon 2003** will be held for ACE at Six Flags Over Texas on September 13-14 (Saturday and Sunday)! More details to come.

**Shock Wave Gets A New Sign:** In keeping its promise to ACE South Central, Tim Baldwin reports that Six Flags Over Texas has a new sign for *Shock Wave*, which made its debut to the coaster world 25 years ago this season. (Thank you Sandra Daniels and Steve Calloway for being true to your word.)



Photo by: Xander Lee

**New ACEonline Feature:** A new and improved Member Services section on the national ACE web site is now in place at [www.aceonline.org/MemberServices](http://www.aceonline.org/MemberServices). More details are in the April 22 E-Update at [www.acesouthcentral.org/Updates/042203.htm](http://www.acesouthcentral.org/Updates/042203.htm)

**2000!** The Regional Website recently had its 2000<sup>th</sup> visitor!

**Happy Birthday!** Best Wishes to Assistant Regional Rep Scott "Mr. T" Connor, who celebrates his birthday on May 19.

**Sea World San Antonio Supports US Troops:** Sea World San Antonio and other Busch Parks will honor our troops with the implementation of "Operation Salute" starting May 23. The Anheuser-Busch parks will offer free single day admission to active duty military, active reservists, U.S. Coast Guard, National Guardsmen, and as many as four of their direct dependents. "Operation Salute" will run through Veterans Day (Tuesday, November 11). Full details are at: [www.acesouthcentral.org/News/SW2003-3.htm](http://www.acesouthcentral.org/News/SW2003-3.htm).

## South Central Region Loses a Park Founder

Paul Roads, Founder and Owner of Wonderland Park Passed Away on May 7th, 2003

Crediting his machine work experience with Cessna Welding School as one of the key factors in maintaining Wonderland Park in its beginnings, Paul Roads, the park's founder, passed away on May 7. Through the years, Wonderland has certainly grown since its origins in 1951, starting as Kiddieland. Roads supervised the growth of the park, starting with three kiddie rides, one being a coaster, to its influential roots of adding adult rides and renaming the park. Paul's early dealings with Hopkins helped develop water rides that would further the park's success.

Paul served on the IAAPA board for six years receiving many honors. Along with his wife Alethea, Paul started a yearly mini-convention of the loosely-based, but active, Small Amusement Park convention. It still continues today.

Wonderland continues to stay in the family business as Paula, Paul's daughter, and son-in-law Paul (P.D.) Borchardt keep things running superbly, just as Paul had always intended.

— Gary Slade



## THE CROSSOVER—News From Neighboring Regions

**Heart of America (Region 18):** Has a couple of events in the planning stages, one at both Silver Dollar City and Celebration City in mid to late July, plus Coaster Christmas at Silver Dollar City early to mid-December. Worlds of Fun will hold a Halloween event on Sept. 20th.

**Southeast (Region 14):** RIP ROARIN' RAMPAGE RETURNS! On Saturday, September 6. Visionland near Birmingham, Alabama will provide a picnic supper and nighttime ERT on Rampage. Details are being finalized, but for now the park would like a rough count to verify interest and help determine how long the ERT should be in order to figure up the final cost per person and schedule. Please reply to Robert Ulrich ([rulrich@aceonline.org](mailto:rulrich@aceonline.org)) if you would be interested in attending this evening ERT event. But wait! That's not all!

**ACE DAY AT LAKE WINNIE** on Sunday, September 7. Lake Winnepesaukah near Chattanooga, Tennessee will once again roll out the red carpet with the promise of an hour of ERT on the Cannon Ball and Wild Thing along with a great picnic lunch. Once again, while the details are in the works, the event will start at Noon.

**NOTES:** a. It is just an easy 2-hour drive (with a time change) northeast from Visionland to Lake Winnie, if you would like to attend both events.

b. You can also go to the Southeast regional website for additional details ([www.playride.com/ACE](http://www.playride.com/ACE)). c. As more information becomes available, the South Central Regional Rep Team will add it to The Crossover, which is in the Events section of the regional website ([www.ACESouthcentral.org/Crossover/index.htm](http://www.ACESouthcentral.org/Crossover/index.htm)).

**Southwest (Region 20):** The \$59 Preservation Con Rate at the Renaissance Denver Hotel, our hotel for Summer Preservation Con, is amazing. Summer Preservation Con attendees will get an upscale hotel (Renaissance is flagship brand of the Marriott chain) at a rate LOWER than a Fairfield Inn (Marriott's budget brand). Oh yes, the Lakeside Cyclone is one of your Regional Rep's favorite wood coasters of all time. Renaissance Denver Hotel lodging info for ACE's Summer Preservation Con is at ACE On-Line ([www.aceonline.org/flyers/lodging2003.pdf](http://www.aceonline.org/flyers/lodging2003.pdf)).

**Holiday World ([www.holidayworld.com](http://www.holidayworld.com)):** In 2003 Holiday World offers ACE members the following discounts with presentation of a valid/current ACE Membership Card: General Admission \$16.95, Guests-under-54" & Seniors (60+) \$13.95, and if you arrive past 4:00 pm CT, take another \$2 off. Season Pass (General Admission) \$59.95 and Guests-under-54" & Seniors (60+) \$49.95. A list of all 2003 discounts for ACE members is at [www.aceonline.org/discounts/](http://www.aceonline.org/discounts/)

## Dave's Top 10 Reasons Why ACE Spring Con Rocked!

10. **Unique Coasters - Ultra Twister, Serpent, and XLR-8 (backwards):** There are very few places you can find these types of coasters (plus they all are a hoot and a half!)
9. **The 3-D Effects of Phantom Funhouse:** Da colors! (But keep those clowns away from me!)
8. **Bill Linkenhiemer & Game Host Tim Baldwin:** Trading bars during The Weakest Link (I think Tim won)
7. **New Rides - SWAT & Diablo Falls:** SWAT was ominously impressive while Diablo Falls was wildly fun
6. **Top Notch Food - Pappasito's Tex-Mex and Pappas Bar-B-Q:** Such an unexpectedly delightful and delectable surprise (Thanks Daryl!)
5. **Schwarzkopf Coasters - Greezed Lightnin' and Viper:** These steel classics are true Texas treasures
4. **Go-Kart ERT:** Woo Hoo!!!
3. **The Texas Cyclone:** This wood wonder is back as one of the very best coasters anywhere!
2. **Friends - (from all over the region AND all over the country):** Always a special treat
1. **Daryl, Chuck, Bob, Joyce, Kent, Terry, Lynda, George and Their Crews:** You all made this one especially memorable! *Special Related Note: This Regional Rep has never seen so many smiling employees at AstroWorld. Even during the park's regular hours when the heat and crowds came, the employees were friendly and caring not just to ACE, but to everyone!*



**Feature Member:  
Steven Castaneda**

**Steven, how or when did you become interested in roller coasters?**

For as long as I can remember I've always had a fascination with spinny rides, even though I was too scared to go on them. My first "big" coaster was Jokers Revenge at Fiesta Texas. I have been riding coasters ever since. There isn't anything I won't ride.

**You're a relatively new member, but you've been seen at a lot of events. Pick one or two that stand out to you as favorites, and tell us why.**

Lone Star Coasterthon (lots of ERT) and IAAPA (lots of cool stuff).

**You lived in the New York City area for a while. What parks did you visit, and how often would you go coaster riding?**

I'd go coaster riding at least once a month, mainly at Great Adventure. Dorney Park, Kennywood, Rye Playland, LI Adventureland and Coney Island were some other parks I visited during my time in NYC. I plan on visiting a few of those again soon.

**Now you're back in San Antonio, home of two great theme parks. How often do you try to visit them?**

I try to go at least 2 - 3 times a month to Fiesta Texas. I do not have a pass to Sea World, yet.

**Are there any particular additions or changes you would like to see at Fiesta Texas or Sea World Texas?**

I'd like to see one pass for both parks, and maybe some more spinny rides at Fiesta Texas.

**What is your current "track count"?**

I am currently at 114. My 100th was Great American Scream Machine at Six Flags Over Georgia.

**You are well-known for your love of flat rides, or as you call them, spinny rides. What are some of your favorites?**

Orbiter, Break Dance/Crazy Dance and Music Express and any rides that go fast and spin a lot.

**Tell us about your other hobbies/interests.**

Photography. I take my digital camera with me almost everywhere I go. Especially to the parks, I just love taking pictures of roller coasters and rides. Have also done some video editing and have made two park videos.

**Free question. Say anything!**

<http://home.satx.rr.com/ddr> is my web site.



The Regional Rep Team knows firsthand that Steven is on of the biggest DDR fans in the South Central Region.